

NEWS RELEASE

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Brown County Man Faces Federal Meth Conspiracy and Gun Charges

Springfield, IL- The United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, Rodger A. Heaton, announced that a February 6, 2006 trial date has been set for a Brown county, Illinois man indicted by a federal grand jury earlier this month. On December 8, 2005, the grand jury returned the indictment charging Larry D. Butler, age 44, of rural Brown county, Illinois, with conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine (one count), possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute (one count), and two counts of possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. The indictment had remained sealed pending Butler's arrest. Butler was arrested and made his initial appearance in federal court on December 14, 2005.

The indictment alleges that from December 2003 through February 11, 2004, Butler conspired with others to manufacture five or more grams of methamphetamine. Butler allegedly obtained pseudoephedrine pills, lithium batteries and other precursors necessary in the manufacture of methamphetamine and recruited others to procure pseudoephedrine pills and lithium batteries. Butler allegedly installed security devices, including security cameras, at or near his clandestine laboratory on his rural Brown county property. The indictment further alleges that on February 11, 2004, Butler possessed two loaded firearms, a 12 gauge shotgun and a 357 caliber revolver.

The charges are the result of an investigation by the West Central Illinois Task Force, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Illinois State Police. The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Delores R. Hurley of the Illinois Attorney General's Office and Assistant U.S. Attorney Esteban F. Sanchez.

If convicted, the offenses of conspiracy to manufacture a controlled substance - (methamphetamine,) and possession of 50 or more grams of methamphetamine with intent to distribute carries a mandatory minimum statutory penalty of five years to 40 years in prison and a fine of up to \$2,000,000. For each count of possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking offense, the penalty is a mandatory five-year term of imprisonment to life which must be served consecutive to any term of imprisonment imposed upon conviction of the underlying drug trafficking offense.

During the December 14, 2005 court hearing, U.S. Magistrate Judge Byron Cudmore ordered Butler detained in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service pending a detention hearing scheduled on December 20, 2005, at 9:30 a.m.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation; the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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